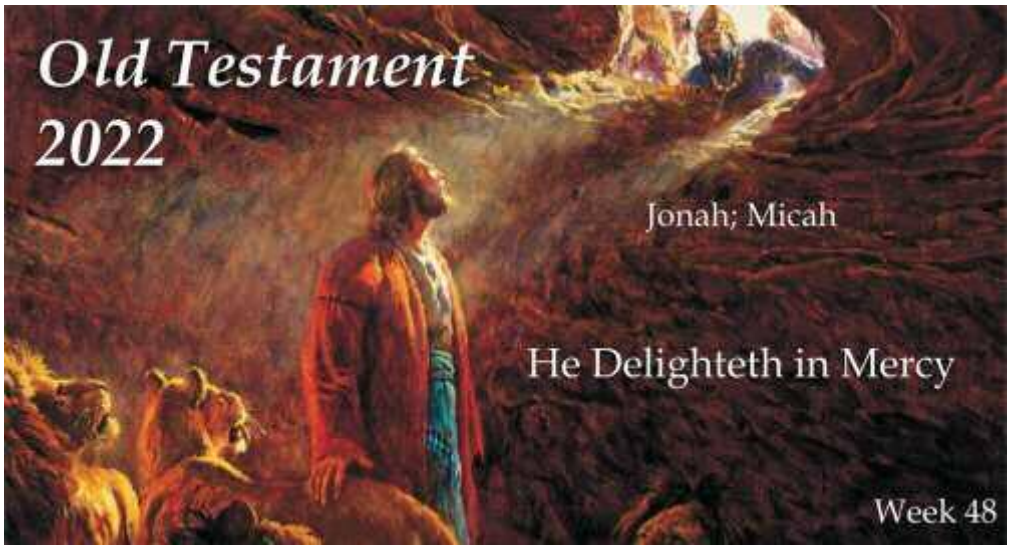

Week 48 is scheduled for study Nov. 21-27, 2022. Everything in this week's lessons revolves around God's mercy, His love for His children. Whether it is about missionary work, temple work, or just being better people, God wants us to learn to live lives filled with mercy.

Day 1

As you record your impressions, think about how the principles in Jonah and Micah relate to what you have been learning in the scriptures.

Jonah 1-4; Micah 7:18-19 - The Lord is merciful to all who turn to Him.

This week's objectives in italics above tell us to record our impressions of what we read, and to think about how the principles we learn about in Jonah and Micah "relate to what you have been learning in the scriptures." Before I address the specific title of today's lesson, I will mention a little about what I learned in general from this week's readings.

For me, the emphasis in Jonah has always been on the punishment of Nineveh for their extreme wickedness. But this time around my attention has been grabbed and focused on the Lord's desire to save the people of Nineveh from destruction. He sent Jonah out of His abundant mercy for the people of Nineveh.

Israel was also given many opportunities to repent before the Lord finally had enough and they suffered the fulness of His wrath in their dispersion. But even then their punishment was promised to be temporary - long, but temporary. When their time of reclamation would finally come, His promise was that He would never again be angry with His people. He would bless them and prosper them, and gather them from the corners of the earth back to live in Zion.

Jonah was in Joppa, on the seashore, when he was called to go to Nineveh to preach repentance to them. That was about 550 miles away, quite a distance for him to travel. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire - the "evil" empire if you will. Jonah wanted and hoped they would be destroyed. All the prophecies said that they would destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel and take the people, at least those left alive, back to Assyria. So what did Jonah do? He hopped on a boat that was literally going in the opposite direction. Tarshish wasn't just 550 miles in the opposite direction from Joppa on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, Tarshish was 2,500 miles west on the southern shores of modern Spain, next to the Atlantic Ocean. In other words, Jonah was fleeing to, what was to him, the opposite end of the earth from where the Lord wanted him to be.

The Lord caused a storm to arise that threatened the safety of the boat Jonah was in. God's purpose was to teach Jonah a lesson, not to terrorize or kill Jonah's shipmates. The storm was just bad enough that everyone on board realized that some god was angry and needed to be appeased. When they found Jonah below deck sleeping they were astonished. He admitted that the storm was his fault from running from the God of nature, He who created the land and sea. He told them that the only way to save their own lives was to throw him (Jonah) overboard, which they very reluctantly did. The storm ceased, and they were able to sail onward. Jonah on the other hand was swallowed by a big fish and spent the next three days in the fish's belly. This gave him plenty of time to think about the wisdom of trying to run from God.

After three days in the fish's belly, Jonah finally vowed to God that he would perform the work God had given him to do. So God spoke to the fish and the fish coughed up Jonah on the shore of the sea. Now Jonah had an even longer distance to travel to get to Nineveh, since he had been sailing away from it when the storm struck. Eventually, Jonah arrived in Nineveh and did as he promised he would do, and delivered the Lord's message to the people. The city of Nineveh was so large that it took four days to travel

from one end of it to the other, so Jonah had to deliver his message in multiple places throughout the city so everyone could learn of his message.

An important point made in the Bible Dictionary about the book of Jonah is that Jonah didn't write it. The book was written about Jonah by an unknown author. One of the points of this story is to demonstrate that God is God over all the earth, not just over His covenant people. The Lord knew that if He sent the people of Nineveh His warning through the mouthpiece of God, they would repent. Unfortunately, the Lord also had to deal with a prophet who didn't want to do as instructed, so lessons needed to be learned by Jonah as well as by the people of Nineveh, who did repent with all their hearts and were spared from destruction.

The Lord's mercy for the wicked people of Nineveh reminds me of His conversation with Abraham while in a dream. Abraham asked how he would know that the land of the Amorites would be given to him for an inheritance. The Lord said this in response - (Genesis 15:15-16)

> 15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.
>
> 16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

God told Abraham that he would die more than 400 years before his posterity would inherit the land. They would have to serve the Egyptians for 400 years until the Amorite's iniquity was full and it was time for them to be destroyed. This shows us that the Lord had no desire to destroy the Amorites until it was absolutely needed. This is why Israel served in Egypt for four centuries - God was waiting for the Amorites to become fully ripe in their iniquity. It was Israel's responsibility to destroy them and take their land when it came time.

These are just two examples of the Lord's desire to save people from destruction. God does not delight in destruction, but in mercy, whether we are covenant people or gentiles. Destruction is only the final choice. Time and time again the Lord tells us throughout the scriptures that He wants to forgive us and bless us, but that the choice to repent is always ours to make.

Day 2

As you record your impressions, think about how the principles in Jonah and Micah relate to what you have been learning in the scriptures.

Jonah 1; 3-4 - All of God's children need to hear the gospel.

Who is or who is not ready to hear the gospel message? Do we have any way to tell if someone is really ready or willing to listen to the message of salvation? That is our problem. We too often seem to think that we have any idea as to who will be willing to listen and who will not. That is something only God knows. It is pure hubris to assume we know someone's heart well enough to tell if they are in a state to accept the promptings of the Spirit. That is the Spirit's calling, not ours.

The people of Nineveh were known for their worldliness and their cruelty. It would be reasonable to assume that Jonah would have to work to muster faith in the likelihood of their repentance. One of the lessons the Lord wanted Jonah to learn was that whether or not someone accepts the gospel is between them and the Lord. It is not up to us to determine whether they are given the opportunity to hear the message of the Restoration. The only commandment given us by the Lord is to deliver the message of the Restoration. Bear testimony and He will do the rest. By being faithful in delivering His message to our brothers and sisters in mortality, we free ourselves of sin, and secure God's blessings in our own lives. And when those we have witnessed to accept the gospel our circle of loved ones has just increased.

Day 3

As you record your impressions, think about how the principles in Jonah and Micah relate to what you have been learning in the scriptures.

Micah 4:11-13; 5:8-15; 7:5-7 - Jesus Christ quoted the writings of Micah.

I'm not nearly so concerned that the Savior quoted Micah as I am about what Micah had to say about our day and age. What made reading Micah's words a little difficult is that he was writing within a larger context of understanding. In other words, he didn't prophecy first that the love of people would wax cold for each other in the last days. Instead, he wrote as one who already understands that this will be the social condition in the last days, so he says, without any introduction to the topic, - (Micah 7:5-6)

> 5 ¶ Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.
>
> 6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

I see in these verses a message to distrust the words of all who do not put Christ first in their life, even if those people are very, very close to us. Knowing that deception and intrigue will be all around us in the last days, Micah (Micah 7:7-8) tells us to look to God in all things, for He will be a light to us in the days of darkness.

> 7 Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.
>
> 8 ¶ Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.

In Micah 5:8-15 Micah speaks of the millennial reign of Christ. When our Lord returns, all that we have known of how the world is currently will change. God will wipe away all that is evil and the righteous will be uncontested in the earth.

I find it interesting that the Savior quoted Old Testament prophets to add credence to what he was telling the people, yet it was Christ who gave those very words to the prophets centuries before. So actually, Jesus was quoting himself, but the people wouldn't believe his words, they wanted him to back up his words by using the words of people they trusted, the old prophets.

Day 4

As you record your impressions, think about how the principles in Jonah and Micah relate to what you have been learning in the scriptures.

Micah 6:1-8 - What doth the Lord require of thee?

More than any other message I have seen in the Old Testament this year, the one that stands out to me more than any other is that God values mercy above all other behaviors. He demonstrates that by His own joy in being merciful to His own children. Time and time again He has the prophets preach obedience and mercy to one another over any other attribute they are currently demonstrating in their lives. God wants us to

be kind to one another, to forgive each other, to cherish our relationships with one another, and to love each other as we should love Him.

The overriding attributes that make up the term mercy is to desire to be gentle and kind, to forgive another's trespasses, and to desire to forebear punishment in the hopes of reconciliation. Doesn't mercy describe Christ to a tee? Over and over again God's complain about His people is that they have become predatory to each other. The powerful took advantage of the less powerful, the rich took advantage of the poor. I hope that as you read those last two sentences that images of today's societal behavior flashed in your mind.

Truly, God isn't concerned with outward appearances of obedience like bringing thousands of offerings to appease Him. All He wants is our demonstrations of love and mercy towards others. By this He will know we are truly trying to be like Jesus (Micah 6:8).

> 8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

FHE/Personal Study

Micah 4:1-5 - Come to the Lord

This section of the week's lessons has only two sentences. I nearly passed over it, but the second sentence caught my mind's eye. "What can we do to help fulfill this prophecy in our home?" The first sentence asks what in these verses "will bring peace and prosperity to the Lord's people". Let's look at verse two of Micah 4.

> 2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

What does this have to do with me and my home? Isn't this verse talking about the nations of the earth coming to the temples of God so He can teach us of His ways? This is clearly a view of how things will be in the millennium.

As I was thinking of the bigger picture, a thought from long ago came back into my mind. Peace among nations is not achieved one nation at a time. It is achieved one heart at a time, influencing one family at a time, which influences one community at a time. Only then will a nation find peace. So if the nations of the earth are going to have to come to the "mountain of the Lord", the temple, that means that the people, as individuals are going to be valuing the covenants and the worship opportunities found within the Lord's house. They will be coming because they are being converted to living Christlike lives. Those values will be taught in their homes, which will change the nature of their communities, and hence their nation.

In other articles I have talked about how the Lord specializes in dealing with small and individual things to bring about great changes. This is another example of why people will be coming from all nations of the earth to the house of the Lord. They will be finding individual conversion through their attendance in the temple, which strengthens their family life, their social life, and hence their whole community. When enough of these communities are blessed by the individual devotion shown by each person to the commandments of God we will see many nations coming to the "house of the God of Jacob." The fulfillment of this verse begins with me and with you, not some politician.

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OT48-2022 - He Delighteth in Mercy

Week 48